The Builder.

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ANXIOUS to convey early information to our readers on all occurrences within our province, and to offer such opinions and suggestions as appear desirable, we occasionally find at the close of our week an accumulation of subjects, each worthy of separate and lengthened notice, for the full consideration of which we have neither time nor space. This happens to be the case on the present occasion; and we propose, therefore, to throw them together, in the shape of a gossipping article, and to return hereafter to such of them as may call for further notice.

This will especially be the case with the "Report of a Special Committee of the Council of the Government School of Design," which, after great delay, many questions in the House of Commons, even its removal from the House after being placed there, has at last made its appearance, and will probably lead to an improvement in the management of the school, at present, undeniably unsatisfactory and inefficient. The report itself (occupying seven pages and a quarter out of the 144 contained in the blue book) is very brief, but, taken in connection with the evidence and statements laid before the committee,* will be found valuable.

According to the report the following are the principal points complained of:—

"1. That the principles of ornament, and the practice of original design as applicable to manufactures, are not efficiently taught.

2. That a knowledge of manufacturing processes, so as to enable the students to unite fitness and practicability in ornament, is not communicated.

3. That a large proportion of the students receive instruction only in elementary drawing, and, consequently, that an expensive class of masters are employed, especially in the morning school, in that elementary instruction, instead of in teaching the higher branches of art.

4. That, in consequence of the space occupied by the elementary classes, there is not sufficient accommodation for painting. (The deficient ventilation complained of, has since, to a great degree, been remedied).

5. That there is not sufficient accommodation for modelling, and none for casting.

6. That the collection of works of art, and books of prints, belonging to the school, are, from inaccessibility, and want of the means of reference, by descriptive catalogues, of less use to the students than ought to be the case.

7. That the directorship is a barrier between the council and the masters; prevents a direct communication of the masters with the council, and the prompt application of remedies to inconveniences complained of; thus diminishing their sense of responsibility, by depriving them of the credit of success, or discredit of failure, with the classes entrusted to them.

8. That, under the present arrangements, the council is burthened with the management of many official and financial details, which might be left wholly to some official person, reserving the time of the council for the consideration of the more important matters relating to the general arrangements of the school, its main objects, and the best mode of carrying them out."

* The committee consisted of the following members:—Mr. Cockerell, R.A., Mr. Etty, R.A., Mr. Gardiner, Mr. Hawes, M.P., Mr. R. Ker, Mr. Lefevre (chairman of the committee), Mr. Richmond, Sir R. Westmacott, R.A., and Mr. Wyse, M.P.

The parties examined were Mr. Wilson, director, Mr. Redgrave, Mr. Townsend, Mr. Horsley, Mr. Le Jeune, Mr. Richardson, and Mr. Stevens. In addition to letters, &c., from the above, there are also printed statements from M. Belloc, director of School of Design, Paris, Mr. R. Burchett, a late student, Mr. Dyce, A.R.A., Mr. R. Ker, Mr. Poynter, Dr. Cooke Taylor, Mr. Thompson, of Cliffe-vie, and Sir Richard Westmacott.

After expressing their conviction that the power of exact imitation is the first thing to be acquired, the committee suggest that some knowledge of anatomy and structural botany should be given, in addition to the several heads of instruction already attended to. A thorough revision of the copies now in use in the school must be made. The complaint that the principles of ornament and the practice of original design as applicable to manufacture are not efficiently taught demand the most serious attention of the council. While they think that the advantages derived from the present instruction is under-rated by some of the witnesses, they say:—

"We cannot, however, regard this instruction, which appears to be neither general nor systematic, as *the whole* which ought to be given in respect of ornamental design. On the contrary, having regard to the principal object for which the School of Design was instituted (the teaching of design with a view to the improvement of those branches of manufacture which are susceptible of ornament), and to the intentions of Government and Parliament, and the amount of the funds devoted to this purpose, we think that we should endeavour to devise and carry into effect a systematic and complete course of instruction, which should embrace the theory and principles of ornamental design (including the history and explanation of the different styles), and the application of those principles to the various kinds of manufacture, to the end that the power of making original designs may be acquired by the pupil, and may be exercised by him, whilst in the school."

They recommend lectures, a course of reading, analyses of the principles of ornamental art, and that suitable themes or subjects for original designs should be submitted to the students. They also recommend the creation of several classes, according to sufficiency, for instruction in design, a public exhibition of the works of the students, and the distribution of rewards. They think it desirable that the masters who teach design should possess a general knowledge of the peculiar conditions to be observed, in producing designs for different manufactures. The establishment of a few subsidiary schools in the metropolis, where the elementary portion of drawing might be taught by subordinate instructors, so as to give greater accommodation for the study of design at Somerset House, is recommended.

As to the director: whether under that or another name, they consider a paid officer for the supervision of the instruction and discipline of the school indispensable.

"The committee admit the difficulty incidental to this arrangement, namely, that masters of adequate talent and eminence in their profession, will feel unwilling to serve in subordinate relation to the officer in question, who, however well qualified for his general duties, may have less knowledge and experience than the master in the branches of instruction which they teach. Your committee think that the best mode of meeting this difficulty is, by defining with as much accuracy as possible, the duties of the masters: by not permitting the director to interfere with the masters in the management of their classes; but by reserving all such interference to an instruction committee, and by allowing the masters to communicate freely and directly with such instruction committee, and also to report respecting their classes and their own branches of instruction, to the council.

Your committee approve of the principle, that the masters to whom classes are entrusted should each have the full credit of success of his class, and the discredit of failure."

Throughout the evidence the importance of the point here alluded to, and to which we have often referred, is strongly dwelt on. Take, for example, one extract from Mr. Townsend's evidence. In reply to a question put to him by Sir Richard Westmacott, he said to the chairman:—

"This, Sir, involves a point of much nicety. Will it be offensive that I speak with unreserved candour? . . . . . *The Chairman.*—By no means: we are ready to hear all your opinions. . . . . I do then firmly believe (and I have had as much experience in the school as any artist, except Mr. Dyce, Mr. Herbert, and Mr. Wilson), that at the present moment the *whole system* is one which is not calculated to carry out the objects the Government had in starting the school. The truest, most powerful stimulus to the masters would be an honourable distinction in the conduct of the school: from this they are now shut out. Their offices are not posts of honour. The improvement of art is never obtained by the depression of its professors. Yet, at the present moment, I feel the situation I have obtained there to be valuable only in regard to pecuniary emolument, and that is not very great. I cannot conceive that it can be a proper arrangement, that the artists who occupy the situations of the chief working officers in a great Government Institution should in any way feel themselves put in a subordinate position, they being the really efficient workers-out of all the operations of instruction in the school."

"The head masters are looked upon as inferior to the director, as in fact the mere servants of the council, bound to work out the ideas of the director, whether they can shew that those ideas are correct or not."

That it is so is clear: and this must forthwith be altered. An honourable distinction in the conduct of the school is the best stimulus that can be given to the masters.

Enough, however, on this head at present: we must now look at art in another place, namely, in Westminster Hall, where are gathered together the 123 works of art submitted in competition to the Royal Commissioners of Fine Arts, as mentioned last week.

Before doing so, however, let us once more draw attention to the preparation for the destruction of the hall which has been made around it. Mr. Stuart Wortley pointed out, the other night, in the House of Commons, that the screen which had been used for the exhibition of the cartoons would tend, should a fire occur, to the destruction of the whole fabric. We are much more fearful, however, of the erections outside,—a parcel of wooden sheds, with fire-places in them, piled round about the hall as if for the express purpose of burning it down. Surely some other arrangement for the officials here accommodated could be made. The reply that Mr. Wortley received to his remark will be less satisfactory to artists, by the way, than it was to him. Lord Murpeth said there would be no exhibition of drawings or cartoons in Westminster Hall after the one then about to open; as soon as that exhibition closed, the woodwork would be removed.

But as to the exhibition itself. It is certainly most creditable to the country: and remembering what other works have been produced in England during the time since this competition was advertised, may be regarded as little less than extraordinary.

In the notice of the exhibition which appeared in our last number, written before the decision of the judges* was known, nearly the whole of the selected works are pointed out for special commendation, as an examination of the following list of the successful competitors will shew.

Premiums of Five Hundred Pounds.—"Burial of Harold at Waltham Abbey." F. R. Pickersgill, 8, Leigh-street, Burton-crescent; "Alfred inciting the Saxons to prevent the Landing of the Danes, by encountering them at Sea," G. F. Watts, 40, Cambridge-terrace, Edgeware-road; "The Battle

* Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Robert Peel, Mr. Tennant, Rogers, Sir Richard Westmacott, R.A. Mr. Richard Cook, and Mr. William Boxall, R.A.

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